Editorial: Dialogue and Creativity

Culture and Dialogue 7.1 focuses on “Dialogue and Creativity.” Publishing an issue on a theme that pertains to “creativity” may, for some, appear to be simply a rehash of all-too-familiar debates. It is perhaps less common to understand creativity within the dynamics of the dialogue and from different angles, whether in the sciences or the arts, whether in terms of its forms or its dynamics, its temporality or instrumentality, its metaphysical or ethical dimensions, or, simply, in terms of its historical condition or renewing nature.

Creativity may be exemplary of a rule that cannot be formulated, or, to put it in a less morally-loaded fashion, creativity may just be the renewing of worlds that do make sense to us. Creativity, therefore, is not *in-nihilo*. Of course not. Nor is it destructive. Or else, we should use another word. It may be destructive of the world it inexorably leaves behind, but this would already be a shift in interpretative focus. Perhaps it would be truer to say that creativity is an emptying movement that departs from the already-known, the self as we know it, the recognisable world with its laws and order; creativity leaves behind the very traditions and cultural values of all kinds that make it possible. Not only is history a necessary component of creativity, but for anyone to envisage its possibility one needs to make oneself available to the past and what has already been established. Creativity cannot therefore be *ex-nihilo*. Neither *ex-nihilo* nor *in-nihilo*. Creativity thus involves a double emptying movement, which – as one can easily anticipate – characterises the very nature of the dialogue: an availability to the formed world that metamorphoses into an availability to the world in formation. Creativity is therefore in essence ethical, and creative non-sense is no creativity at all. The genius artist or, rather, to avoid using a word this time as historically loaded as controversial in contemporary Western thought, the creative artist is the one who manages to almost encapsulate these two emptying movements with their respective temporal orientations into a single brush-stroke, word-stroke, sound-stroke, or body-stroke. Creativity in art becomes almost a-temporal and therefore eternal. It is the unfolding of the worldly scroll; the breath whose ethical essence owes to its nearing eternity; a virtually non-dual energy that conflates the emptying movements towards two poles, those of the formed world and the world to be formed. In this sense, creativity is not phenomenal but kinetic. Or, rather, as soon as one thinks of

creativity as a phenomenon, one has already crystalized it as unidirectional appearing, with an origin and an end.

Needless to say, creativity can also be found in the sciences, whether natural or social. Where, in art, creativity pertains to the very kinetic relation between the poles, in the sciences the same creativity in its principle is used in order to retrieve worlds and foresee new paradigms. The scientist requires the same ability to negotiate a double emptying movement: in this case to both absorb from the known reality and withdraw from the already known in order to explain the un-known. The dialogical principle is that between the scientist and the reality at stake. Creativity is of course fundamental for both the sciences and the arts, but the aims and the methods are different. In the former, creativity is used as means to retrieve the poles, to explain and to know them, and as such it remains temporally oriented; in the latter, creativity nears eternity because it is not experienced instrumentally. Thus, it may make sense to qualify creativity in the arts as being, from one angle, “disinterested” and therefore close to being temporally un-oriented.

All essays in this journal issue address in different ways from different perspectives and in different relevant fields what is at stake in the dynamics of creativity. John Pauley analyses the “the conditions for creativity” in a particular form of human activity, i.e., conversation, and does so by highlighting the “constant tension between the regime of the status quo and the possibilities intrinsic to creativity.” Rudi Capra reflects on the dynamics of creativity in the Chan pedagogy of the Song era, through the use of *gongan* literature, and in ‘particular ritual dialogues between masters and students’ as evidenced in the Chan Buddhist text *Blue Cliff Record* (碧巖錄). John Baldacchino, inspired by the thought of playwright Dario Fo, discusses and advocates a form of creativity found in a dialogical pedagogy – a “weak pedagogy” – that enacts irony and satire, and that “refuses to provide solutions presumed on measurement, certainty or finality.” Colleen Fitzpatrick explores an aspect of creativity that is embedded in the reciprocal, complementary relationship between painting and mindfulness, a conception that she argues can be traced in Mikel Dufrenne’s phenomenology of aesthetic experience, as well as in Buddhist thought. Joshua M. Hall considers creativity in choreography through the lens of Cornelius Castoriadis’ conception of imagination and time that he elaborated in his *The Imaginary Institution of Time* and “Time and Creation.” In choreography “society’s time reworks itself into the poetic text to which it dances.” Finally, Åsa Andersson in *Observations of Lightness* offers an example of what is nowadays known as creative writing, in other words creativity at work through temporal variations, shifts, cuts and returns as enacted in the narration.

I am most grateful to my editorial colleagues, Martin Ovens, Loni Reynolds and Erika Mandarino, as well as to Robert Clarke for his book review; all the Editorial Board members of the Journal; the anonymous reviewers who lent on good will their scholarship and expertise to improve the standard of essays; and, needless to say, all the contributors to this issue on “Creativity and Dialogue.” The next theme of the Journal will be “Culture, War and Sovereignty” (Volume 7, Number 2, 2019) – doubtless another topical and thrilling, albeit sensitive, challenge ahead!

Gerald Cipriani